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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 000837

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STATE FOR DRL, EAP/PD, EAP/CM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2032

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: ZHAO YAN RELEASE BEFORE FEBRUARY 18?

REF: 06 BEIJING 17951

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission David S. Sedney. Reasons 1.4 (b /d).

¶1. (C) Zhao Yan will "definitely" be released before Chinese New Year (which starts February 18), an unnamed Chinese government official told a Reporters Without Borders delegation visiting Beijing, according to New York Times Bureau Chief Joe Kahn. Kahn told Poloff on February 2 that Reporters Without Borders handed the government official a list of cases of concern that included journalists and internet writers who are currently imprisoned. When the official reached Zhao Yan's name on the list, he reportedly told the group that they should "strike Zhao Yan's name from the list" because his release is imminent.

¶2. (C) Kahn told Poloff that prison authorities have recently become more lenient towards Zhao, who is scheduled for release in September 2007. Prison authorities have permitted family members to visit Zhao in prison in the time since the Beijing High Court affirmed Zhao's fraud conviction on December 1. Family members report that Zhao's physical health is good and that authorities allow Zhao to read English-language materials previously refused to him. Kahn cited appreciation for United States Government efforts to raise Zhao's case and requested continued attention to the case.

RANDT